



19th Century Games

What?? No T.V.!!

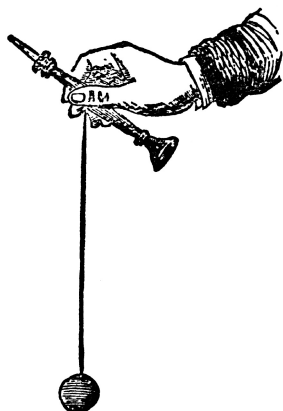


How did President Van Buren's grandchildren entertain themselves while spending their summers visiting at Lindenwald in Kinderhook? Of course there was no television or DVD's to watch, no movies to go to, not even any computer games to play. Never-the-less, the kids that came to Lindenwald and their contemporaries had lots to do. There were plenty of great physical action games some of which are still popular today, outdoor recreation and lots of games that taught hand-eye coordination. Some of the games are discussed below. If you want to sharpen your skills you can even speak with a ranger and try your hand at "ball and cup" or "the graces" or even "hoop and stick."

Active Games

Tag, tug-of-war, and hopscotch are common active games that children enjoyed playing during the 19th century and which many children and adults of today still recognize and play. Some of the active games that were frequently enjoyed in the past which are less well-known are games such as hoop and stick, the graces, blind man's buff and quoits as well as battledore and shuttlecock. Some of the games have unusual names, but most will quickly recognize the games when they explained and see the similarities they share with modern games. Quoits is similar to horseshoes while badminton and tennis are the modern decedents of battledore and shuttlecock.

Skill Games



Games which improved hand and eye coordination were extremely popular for both boys and girls in the past. While they were popular because they are great fun to play they also trained children to have precise dexterity and a fine eye for moving objects. These skills, while important today were even more necessary during president Van Buren's time. The need to be able to handle sharp objects or tools and use them to accomplish your work was frequent. To be able to use such tools and object without injury was imperative.

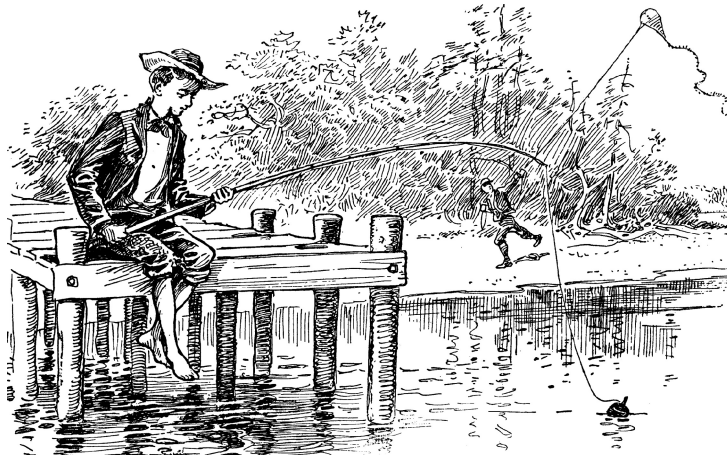
As with active games, many of the games of skill are quickly recognizable. Yo-yos and ball and cup games of all types were popular. Marbles are still sometimes enjoyed today, but were hugely popular in the past. Less well known skill games include limberjack, Jacob's ladder and many types of spinning tops.

Outdoor Recreation



Hunting, fishing, swimming, ice skating and sledding were all very popular activities in the country for adults and children in the 19th century in the north. Oftentimes hunting and fishing were more than simply recreational activities. For impoverished families a successful hunting or fishing outing could mean the difference between hunger pangs and a satisfying meal.

Horses and horse riding were, of course, very common around Lindenwald and President Van Buren was an avid horseman. He enjoyed riding his great black stallion named Duroc every morning from ten to fifteen miles.



Give it a Try

Do you want to see how you might stack up to a child in the 19th century? Speak with a Ranger to try a ball and cup game or a spinning top or if you're feeling adventurous you can try the graces or maybe hoop and stick. Whatever you do, have fun playing 19th century games!

Come for a Visit

Ranger-led tours of Lindenwald are scheduled throughout the day. See the centerpiece of President Van Buren's Lindenwald farm. The mansion is also where Van Buren managed two presidential campaigns and entertained politicians and celebrities during the turbulent 1840's and 1850's.

Martin Van Buren NHS is located on Route 9H, two miles south of the Village of Kinderhook, New York. The telephone number is 518-758-9689, email the park at MAVA_info@nps.gov. Our web site is found at www.nps.gov/mava.